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27 October 1970

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Mr. Clifford's Query

1. I have looked over my notes on the Presidential Commission meetings of Saturday, 2 March, and Sunday, 3 March 1968. Neither makes any reference to a written Presidential directive, though the tenor of Clifford's comments certainly suggests that he is acting within the frame of terms of reference received directly from President Johnson.

2. I am not sure whether the first meeting of this particular clan was on Friday, 1 March 1968, or on the morning of Saturday, 2 March. I know there was a morning session that Saturday, which I did not attend, and it is possible that Clifford outlined his marching orders from the President at that time. He, however, should certainly be in the best position to remember what those marching orders were and in what form he received them. Rostow, incidentally, was present at both the 2 March and 3 March sessions.

3. At the 2 March meeting, Bill Bundy passed around copies of a notebook the first entry of which is a memorandum for the President entitled, "Alternative Strategies in SVN." This is labeled "3d Draft/1 Mar 68." The lead paragraph of this draft begins as follows:

"This memorandum examines the situation in SVN in light of U.S. political objectives and General Westmoreland's request for additional troops, as stated in General Wheeler's report. It considers alternatives to the current directives to General Westmoreland..."

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4. You will note that this draft's lead paragraph makes no reference to any written instruction from the President. It does suggest (what other evidence also indicates to be the case) that the Commission was somehow tasked with looking at the situation in Vietnam in light of our political objectives and with specific reference to Westmoreland's request as reflected in Wheeler's report. This report is General Wheeler's memorandum for the President entitled, "Military Situation and Requirements in SVN," 27 February 1968.

5. In sum, my records and recollection make it pretty clear that Wheeler's memo prompted considerable "Tuesday Lunch" discussion which, in turn, led President Johnson to direct the convening of the brethren for a thorough bidding review under Clifford's chairmanship. The same recollection augmented by records makes it quite clear what Clifford's marching orders were. None of my material, nor my memory, sheds specific light on the specific question of whether these Presidential marching orders were expressed orally or in writing or whether, if initially expressed orally, they were ever confirmed in writing.

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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